1818, there was placed above the high altar and underneath the great eastern window a valuable painting by Tintoretto; the subject, Jesus Christ washing his apostles' feet; but the light does not shew it to advantage. This interesting picture was presented to the church by Sir M. W. Ridley, Bart.

THE STEEPLE.

This is one of the noblest and most admired structures that adorn our island. It exhibits an originality, boldness, and magnificence which renders it an architectural prodigy; viewed at a distance, the whole combines to produce one grand effect; and examined closely and in detail, the happy application of the principles of arcuation, of thrust, and of pressure to every part, excites the greatest surprise and delight. The ornaments also, though simple, are appropriate and significative. All, indeed, must concur in admiring the refined taste and consummate judgment of the architect, who, without any servility of imitation, has produced this triumph in English art, which rivals in execution, and surpasses in ingenuity, the proudest edifices of the ancient Greeks and Romans.‖

The tower, which stands at the west end of the church, measures at the outside of the base 36 feet 9 inches by 35 feet; it is substantially built and of elegant proportions. From the base to the battlements it is divided into three separate parts or stories. The first or lower story is the west entrance to the church. The large window above the door is boldly ornamented with tracery, and the mullions strengthened with transoms. The second story has one small window, handsomely turned and divided by a single mullion with small pointed heads; from the ground to this story rise buttresses of three sides. The third story being set within the lower ones gives the tower at a short distance a pyramidical and elegant appearance; at the angles of this story are flat buttresses rising over the battlements and resting against the turrets; they are tastefully terminated by a human figure on a bracket. Each side of the tower is divided into two equal spaces, by a delicate buttress which rises up square to the battlements, and then by the contrivance of a little arch is canted off, forming a small octagonal turret. The sides of the tower by this buttress are divided into two equal spaces, each of which contains a large unglazed window, through which the sound of the bells passes; these windows are of elegant proportions, with rather a flat-pointed arch head divided into compartments by a mullion, and the height by a transom, each ornamented with quatrefoil turns. The tower terminates with perforated battlements.

Eight turrets and pinnacles of matchless elegance rise from the angles and sides of the tower; the pinnacles are crocketted, and each finishes with a lofty vane, ornamented with fleur-de-lis at the angles and sides. The angular turrets are considerably larger and higher than those of the sides; from their base spring four segments of arches, elegantly curved and cut into mouldings: at their intersection, twenty feet above the battlements, they support a very elegant, lofty, square lantern, which has an open window on each side, divided by a mullion and a cross bar. There are small buttresses at the angles surmounted by ornamented pinnacles, each of which supports a vane; from the great bows rise small buttresses, which form an additional support to the lantern, by which means the upper line forms an ogee curve, and is crocketted. The lantern, surmounted by a lofty and well-proportioned pinnacle, and ornamented with crockets, which terminates with a noble vane, "finishes this unexampled and extraordinary building."

This beautiful steeple is 193 feet 6 inches high. The height from the ground to the top of the battlements 117 feet 9 inches, and to the bottom of the lantern 138 feet 6 inches. The masonry is executed in the bold manner of the Associated Free and Accepted Masons; most of the stones are such as the workmen might have carried under their arms: the tall, stately, and elegant pinnacle at the top is hollow within, and built with stones only four inches in breadth! The other pinnacles are also remarkably light and ingeniously constructed; the lateral pressure at the butment of the intersecting arches, is counteracted by two strong oak beams, which are preserved by being covered with lead. Indeed, in every part, the skill, science, and ingenuity of the architect are manifest, and the whole appears to be the creation of a rich and refined fancy, corrected by scientific and mathematical principles.

The steeple is plainly a superstructure raised upon the original tower, which appears to have had a battlement of open stone-work and embrasures. Some have ascribed the building of the steeple to David, king of Scotland, who resided here about the year 1135, but the style of the architecture is alone a sufficient refutation of this conjecture, for it possesses all the distinctive lineaments of the mode which obtained in the time of Henry the Sixth. This adds to the probability of the opinion espoused by Brand, who thinks it was raised by Robert Rhodes, who lived in the fifteenth century. He was a most munificent friend of St. Cuthbert, the great tutelar Saint of the diocese, and more particularly of the churches in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where he resided; his arms are on the ceiling underneath the belfry, and this inscription, "Orate pro anima Roberti Rhodes." The corporation have been charged with the reparation of this steeple from time immemorial."—*History of Newcastle.*

A YOUNG C. B.

‖ "No idea of the elegance of the design of the forgotten architect, or lightness of the execution of the masonry of this pinnacle, or upper part of this steeple, can be conveyed by descriptions of the pen."—*Brand.*

"The tower of St. Nicholas' Church is very justly the boast of the inhabitants."—*Pennant.*

"It must unquestionably be regarded as an uncommon specimen of ingenuity and taste."—*Gent. Mag.*

"It is a fabric in my opinion the most beautiful that exists in the world; which surpasses the cathedral of St. Sophia at Constantinople, the Mosque of Sultan Saladin at Jerusalem, the church of St. Peter at Rome, and even the Temple of Minerva at Athens."—Extract from a letter by the late Rev. Joseph Dacre Carlyle, to the Churchwardens of St. Nicholas, and *vide* G. Walbeam's letter, in No. 15, of THE BUILDER.

"A writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* says, on the authority of an inhabitant of Newcastle, 'A deep drain has been recently made so close to the steeple, as to cause the foundation to give way by which a considerable crack has been occasioned, which, in my humble opinion, endangers its safety daily.'—Vol. lxxxiii., May 1813. This is denied in a subsequent number; and the alarmist is accused of indulging himself 'with the superb idea of what a tremendous crash the steeple would make should it ever fall.' There are, however, many cracks in the pillars and the roof underneath the tower which have been plastered over, but they are not of that magnitude to occasion any serious apprehensions for the safety of this lofty erection."—*Hist. of Newcastle.* This, however, was not the case, for it was afterwards found to be necessary to build immense buttresses for the support of the steeple, which were ably and ingeniously executed, under the direction of Mr. John Dobson, architect.

SOMERTON CHURCH, SOMERSETSHIRE.

THE small town of Somerton is situate about 125 miles from London: it is surrounded by beautiful scenery, and the soil is very fertile. It used to be visited by royalty at one time, and several Saxon monarchs have held their courts there. The castle of Somerton, in which John, King of France, was confined after his removal from that of Hereford, A.D. 887, was plundered and destroyed by the Danes, but was soon afterwards rebuilt. The church, of which we have given an engraving, is very peculiar, having an octagonal tower, with six bells. The town of Somerton has only five streets, containing 251 houses, mostly built of the blue-stone from the quarries in the neighbourhood.

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